

NAACP: Bush disses school integration

By Lorinda M. Bullock
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Briefs filed last week by the Bush administration to halt voluntary school integration programs have civil rights and progressive legal groups fearful the gains made by the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision will be reversed.

"Brown v. Board was one of the most significant landmark decisions of the 20th century in 1954. Now 52 years later in 2006, that battle is still being fought in the schools," said John Brittain, chief counsel and senior deputy director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C.

The administration has sided with White parents in districts in Seattle and Louisville, who claim integration guidelines actually discriminate against White students and violate the equal protection clause of the Constitution.

U.S. Solicitor General Paul D. Clement urged the justices in the briefs to rule "That the use of racial classification to achieve a desired racial balance in public schools" is as unconstitutional as racial segregation.

Along with the lawyers for the Jefferson County and Seattle school districts, Ted Shaw, Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Brittain will file briefs in October that argue voluntary integration does

not violate the Constitution. "What we're talking about here in these two cases is the question of whether voluntary integration measures are going to be legal and constitutional. This is all that's left of public school desegregation efforts. For the most part, mandatory desegregation no longer is in play. All that's left is voluntary desegregation measures," Shaw said.

The Supreme Court should hear the arguments in December and are expected to rule by next spring, Brittain said.

In the Louisville case of Meredith v. Jefferson County, Crystal Meredith, a White parent said her son was prohibited from attending the elementary school nearest to his home because of the district's integration guidelines developed in 2001.

The district's guidelines said that Black enrollment in each elementary school should be at least 15 percent and no more than 50 percent.

In the case of Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Schools, a group of parents brought legal action against the district, saying their children were not accepted into their first choice high school because of their race.

Seattle schools adopted their integration guidelines in 1998 to prevent segregation that was caused by the self-segregation in housing patterns in the area.

Although legalized segre-

gation ended with Brown, Brittain said segregation caused by region and where people choose to live still affect racial makeup in schools.

"In short, school integration is in the intensive care unit of the hospital. It's on life support by these voluntary measures," he said.

Shaw said he was especially disturbed by the administration's stance.

"The government has taken a position which essentially supports the notion that it is illegal to consciously do

something that is aimed at reducing racial segregation or inequality. That's a terrible position for the government to take," he said.

He was particularly bothered because in May 2004, President Bush went to Topeka, Ks, and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board.

During Bush's speech, which eloquently highlighted the struggles of African-Americans in the United States since their arrival as slaves, he said: "Segregation

is a living memory and many still carry its scars. The habits of racism in America have not all been broken. The habits of respect must be taught to every generation. Laws against racial discrimination must be vigorously enforced in education and housing and hiring and public accommodations."

Shaw said there is a glaring disconnect from what Bush said in 2004, with what's happening now.

"This is where the rubber hits the road. This is what

counts. That was all ceremony. This is reality and the government's position is one that puts it on the side of those who are arguing positions that ultimately will produce even more segregation in public schools. Public schools in the United States have increasingly become more segregated over the last 15 or 20 years as Brown v. Board of Education has been abandoned."

Brittain said people prematurely breathed sighs of (See Schools, Page 12)

Study: Gender tied to student learning

WASHINGTON (AP) - For all the differences between the sexes, here's one that might stir up debate in the teacher's lounge: Boys learn more from men and girls learn more from women.

That's the upshot of a provocative study by Thomas Dee, an associate professor of economics at Swarthmore College and visiting scholar at Stanford University. His study was to appear Monday in *Education Next*, a quarterly journal published by the Hoover Institution.

Vetted and approved by peer reviewers, Dee's research faces a fight for acceptance. Some leading education advocates dispute his conclusions and the way in which he reached them.

Dee says his research does

support his point that gender matters when it comes to learning. Specifically, as he describes it, having a teacher of the opposite sex hurts a student's academic progress.

"We should be thinking more carefully about why," he said.

Dee warns against drawing fast conclusions based on his work. He is not endorsing single-sex education, or any other policy.

Rather, he hopes his work will spur more research into gender's effect and what to do about it. His study comes as the proportion of male teachers is at its lowest level in 40 years. Roughly 80 percent of teachers in U.S. public schools are women.

Dee's study is based on a nationally representative survey (See Teaching, Page 13)

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